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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W (JHUNTER/ESPRUILL) AND INL/AEE
(KGOLDSTEIN)
BRUSSELS FOR DOJ/DEA (TSCARANTINO)
DOJ FOR DEA/OS/OSE (MCMANAMON/LENARTOWICZ),
DEA/OS/OSE/CNTOC (BROWN)

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SUBJECT: DRUG DESTRUCTION MAY BE FINAL STEP IN COCAINE SAGA

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In what is hoped to be the final step in the narcotics trafficking case that has gripped Sierra Leone since July 2008 (reftel A), the over 700 kilos of cocaine seized by authorities were burned in a public ceremony April 23. The event was attended by law enforcement and government officials as well as civil society and international community representatives. The destruction order was issued as part of the final judgments made on April 22 (reftel B) sentencing the accused traffickers and confirming the forfeiture of assets seized during the investigation. The method for destroying the cocaine had been the subject of spirited debate since the seizure, but following the judicial order authorities moved expeditiously to burn the drugs in a quick and public manner. Legal authorities have made it clear that the drugs are no longer needed as evidence for any further judicial process, including appeals.

PERRY